

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

PATTERNS
Indian Textiles for Export, 1400–1900
OF TRADE

A special exhibition of beautiful Indian textiles – rare treasures traded around the world – opens at the Asian Civilisations Museum

Singapore, 15 November 2011 – Rare textiles decorated with striking patterns and inventive motifs reveal the creativity of Indian textile artists. These textiles, which date from the 15th through the 19th centuries, trace the history of trade and cultural exchange at the time when India might be said to have clothed the world. ***Patterns of Trade: Indian Textiles for Export, 1400–1900***, on show from today to 17 June 2012 at the Asian Civilisations Museum, explores the profound influence of Indian cloth on later textile designs. The textiles on display functioned as clothing, ceremonial cloths, or treasured relics, and were mainly collected from remote regions in Southeast Asia.

High-quality materials and colourfast dyes made Indian textiles highly desirable. The 70 textiles in the exhibition are decorated with floral patterns, sacred motifs, and geometric forms. Some bring to life elephant hunts, animals, rows of lively dancers, and even elegantly dressed women battling fantastic beasts. Many designs are based on traditional Indian patterns, but producers also responded to foreign demand and adapted designs to regional tastes. For example, consumers in Thailand and Sri Lanka influenced textile patterns.

“These bold textiles show the spread of Indian culture across several continents, especially to Southeast Asia,” said Alan Chong, director of the Asian Civilisations Museum. “The textiles are magnificent works of art that also reveal how interconnected the world has been for centuries, as goods and ideas travelled across the Indian Ocean.”

India was the leading producer of textiles for centuries, and millions of metres of cloth were traded around the world each year. They were produced mainly in Gujarat on the west coast of India and on the Coromandel Coast in the southeast. Production involved considerable

technical and artistic skill, as the textiles in this exhibition clearly reveal. They are drawn from a major collection acquired two years ago by the Asian Civilisations Museum, which has made Singapore one of the few places worldwide with an important collection of such extraordinary textiles.

Wherever they were traded, Indian textiles like those on exhibit created a sensation. Records from the 1st century tell of Indian textiles in ancient China and Rome. By the 15th century, a complex network of trade had developed from Africa to China. The quest for spices drew European traders across the Indian Ocean. European consumers were also seduced by the colourful silks and cottons India produced. The popularity of Indian textiles revolutionised European fashion, creating an almost insatiable demand for the bright floral prints and geometric designs of Indian cloth.

Indian trade textiles are of special relevance to Southeast Asia, since they offer rare and important evidence for the history of early trade and cultural exchange in the region. Most of the textiles in this collection were found in Indonesia, where they had been carefully preserved in isolated, traditional communities.

The Indian textile industry was eventually eclipsed by European competitors using modern production methods and the advent of industrial production in the 19th century. These machine-made cloths copied many of the patterns and motifs of earlier Indian models, but they could not duplicate the look and feel of the handmade Indian cloths. As this exhibition shows, they are still able to fascinate us with their intrinsic quality, as well as their beauty and sophistication.

Programming and merchandise highlights

Several themed activities have been planned for the exhibition. International and regional experts will share their insights on the significance of the trade of Indian textiles through a series of lectures. Special curator tours will be held throughout the exhibition. A *Patterns of Trade Weekend Festival*, from 31 March to 1 April 2012, will offer delicious treats, vibrant beats, dazzling dances from India, and craft activities for families. In addition, visitors who join in the museum's New Year's Eve party *Countdown Bash at ACM!* will enjoy free admission to the exhibition on 31 December 2011 from 5pm onwards.

An interactive trail also brings the exhibition alive for visitors of all ages. *Powerful Patterns* provides hands-on fun by encouraging everyone to find their favourite patterns and motifs, uncover the meanings behind them, and complete the challenges in the trail.

Specially designed memorabilia, ranging from exhibition postcards to tumblers and T-shirts are available for purchase at the museum's pop-up store, located in the lobby.

Collection catalogue

The catalogue contains essays by international scholars exploring aspects of the trade and the various markets for Indian cloth. It includes not only the textiles in the exhibition but also many other pieces from the collection recently acquired by the ACM, illustrating the great range of textiles produced in India. The catalogue will be available in the museum shop and at bookstores in early 2012.

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About the exhibition

Patterns of Trade: Indian Textiles for Export, 1400–1900

Exhibition Dates : 15 November 2011 to 17 June 2012

Venue : Special Exhibition Gallery, Asian Civilisations Museum,
1 Empress Place, Singapore 179555

Website : www.acm.org.sg

Enquiries : 6332 7798 / nhb_acm_vs@nhb.gov.sg

Admission charges : \$8 (adult) / \$4 (concession)
Family package at \$20 for up to 5 pax
Free admission for children aged 6 and below
Free admission for students, teachers, full-time National Service men
and senior citizens aged 60 and above (Singaporeans and PRs only)
50% discount for students and senior citizens aged 60 and above

(non-Singaporean / non-PR)
50% discount every Friday, 7-9pm

Opening hours : Monday: 1-7pm, Tuesday to Sunday: 9am–7pm, Friday: 9am–9pm

How to get there : By MRT – Raffles Place, By Bus – 75, 100, 107, 130, 131, 167

For more media information, please contact

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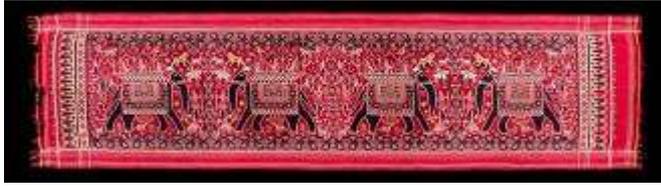
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About the Asian Civilisations Museum (ACM)

The Asian Civilisations Museum is dedicated to exploring the rich artistic heritage of Asia, especially Singapore’s ancestral cultures. Through a collection of works of art and a varied exhibition programme, we hope to deepen understanding of Southeast Asia, China, South Asia, West Asia, and the Peranakan world. Rare among museums in Asia, the ACM connects audiences with many cultures.

Exhibition highlights

Image	Caption
	<p>Fragment: women battling a <i>gajavyala</i> Gujarat, 13th or 14th century 104 X 154 cm Cotton; block printed, drawn and painted, resist and mordant dyed © Asian Civilisations Museum</p>
	<p>Skirt cloth (<i>kain sembagi</i>): cockerel Coromandel Coast, late 16th or early 17th century 113 x 393 cm Cotton; drawn and painted, resist and mordant dyed © Asian Civilisations Museum</p>
	<p>Spread (<i>palampore</i>): eight-pointed star and floral motifs Coromandel Coast, late 18th century 254 x 216 cm Cotton; drawn and painted, resist and mordant dyed © Asian Civilisations Museum</p>



HHanging (*kain patola*): caparisoned elephants

Gujarat, late 18th or early 19th century

108 x 416 cm

Silk; double ikat

© Asian Civilisations Museum



Hanging (*ma'a*): women with veenas and parrots (detail)

Gujarat, mid-15th to mid-17th century

93 x 513 cm

Cotton; block printed, resist and mordant dyed

© Asian Civilisations Museum



Skirt cloth (*kain leluhur*): patchwork centrefield (detail)

Coromandel Coast, 17th or 18th century

223 x 402 cm

Cotton; drawn and painted, resist and mordant dyed

© Asian Civilisations Museum



Hanging (*palampore*): Tree of Life

Coromandel Coast, late 17th or early 18th century

183 x 109 cm

Cotton; drawn and painted, resist and mordant dyed

© Asian Civilisations Museum

